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NEW YORK MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO PASSPORT FRAUD

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE: United States Attorney Tom Colantuono announced that 31 year old Gilberto Gutiérrez of Ozone Park, New York pleaded guilty to count one of an indictment charging him with Passport Fraud.

The indictment alleges that Gutiérrez, a Venezuelan citizen, attempted to obtain a United States passport by giving a false name on his passport application and falsely stating that he was born in Puerto Rico. His passport application was received and reviewed by the National Passport Center in Portsmouth. Sentencing is scheduled for March 17, 2004 before Judge Steven McAuliffe.

U.S. Attorney Colantuono stated: "It is important to our national security that anyone posing as a United States citizen be prevented from fraudulently obtaining a United States passport. The State Department and the Department of Homeland Security have measures in place to detect instances of passport fraud that are uncovered at the National Passport Center in Portsmouth. Through our "Operation Checkmate" program, we will continue to prosecute individuals who attempt to illegally procure United States passports at the National Passport Center."

This case was investigated by the Diplomatic Security Service of the U.S. State Department and by the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement of the Department of Homeland Security. Federal agents arrested Gutiérrez on June 25th in New York City in connection with this indictment. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark A. Irish.